

INTELLFORMA 82

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COUNTRY: Germany/US

OIA [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Visiting German Professor's
Impressions of Contemporary US

DATE 25 June '53

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1. I received some new impressions about minority problems, especially Negroes, Puerto Ricans and displaced persons of recent immigration status. Also, everywhere I heard much about the investigating committees or rather I 'smelled it', because the US professors do not really freely discuss the matter (with one exception which I experienced). If you won't mind, I must frankly say that it was a rather depressing experience for me to find out that the academic freedom in this country [US] is lower than it is in Germany. I would not say it is lower than under Hitler but as far as freedom to teach is concerned, it seems to be getting there rapidly. How much criticism has the US heaped on German professors for not rising like a man in 1933, but are the US professors any better? They fold up like pocket knives. McCarthyism has the same consequences with regard to character assassination as Hitler, as well as the Denazification had in Germany [Source comment: By this he probably refers to the usual denunciations that go with official acts of political discrimination.]. You used to speak highly of the esprit de corps and the spirit of solidarity of US college professors, as compared to German professors. Should it now not be possible then on that basis to offer resistance at least in some local spots? As far as I can see, it is about the same constant repetition of the sad spectacle of denunciation and 'sauve qui peut' as we had witnessed in Germany. I do not mean to claim that this is the only impression I got from my trip to the US. It is not even the predominant one. I do not have to tell you in detail how much I found that was positive and hopeful in the US.

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2. In order to explain the German reaction to US cultural influences, let me start off by saying that the time of the 'invasion' of the defeated country by the victors is substantially over. Unfortunately, there is in Germany again a certain contempt for 'Americanism'. It is closely connected with an awareness of the cultural role of the German emigrants and also, for instance, the theft of German patents in technology and natural sciences. This new contempt is, in my opinion, going much too far and ignores how much of enormous significance is being produced here [the US]. Of course, there are certain things which show the negative side of US cultural life. There is a tragic aspect of Mortimer Adler's '102 leading ideas', but is this experiment of 'Summa Dialectica' not the logical correlative of US mass education? In a country where the number of people who have the time, talent and inclination to do so, do not study the leading ideas at their source, or where the number of the people who do so are surprisingly few, the idea of such 'Summa Dialectica' must seem quite reasonable. As far as I can see, very little comes of such an attempt to democratize education to the extreme.
3. "Another hypothesis which I take with me to Germany is that in the US the strongest spiritual force of real significance is the Catholic church. If things continue to drift as they do now the Catholic church will have a great future."
4. Perhaps my perspective is one-sided at the moment, being determined by my questions concerning New York, the population of which appears incredibly tortured, neurotic, tense and hysterical. Chicago has a little of it but not, by far, as much."

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